

+ What does Oprah Really Do for Us? • Remembering Our First Lady

SERVING THE AFRICAN DIASPORA SINCE 1972

February 2006

# the ONYX INFORMER

UNIFIED BY THE DIASPORA  
DIVIDED BY ETHNICITY

What Threatens  
Our Unity

BOSTON HOMICIDES  
What Can We Do to Reclaim?



**SexualHealth@NEU:**  
THE UNTOLD STORY

# February 2006 **Inside**

**Letter from the Editor** Ivelisse Sanchez  
DEEPLY INSPIRED | 2

**Edutainment**  
ED BULLINS | 3 Ivelisse Sanchez  
SOULS OF BLACK FOLKS | 4 Sophia Dauphin

**Nobel or Just Noble? | 5** Candice Springer

**Spotlight**  
XPOSITORY | 6 Katrina Williams

**An Evening with James McBride | 7** Margaret Kamara

**The Onyx Remembers**  
CORETTA SCOTT KING | 8 Margaret Kamara  
RICHARD PRYOR | 9 Christine Williams  
STAN "TOOKIE" WILLIAMS | 9 Shantelle Anderson  
LOW RAWLS | 10 Marsha White

**HIV/AIDS/STDs: The Untold Story | 11** LaDonna LaGuerre

**Boston Homicides | 14** Ivelisse Sanchez

**Unified By The Diaspora,  
Divided By Ethnicity | 16** Krisa Allen

**Commercialization of | 17** Makeiya Kamara  
**Political Martyrs**

CHE GUEVARA | 18 Jose De La Rosa  
MUMIA ABU-JAMAL | 19 Makeiya Kamara  
ASSATA SHAKUR | 19 Makeiya Kamara

**Por Ahora, Estoy Tica | 20** Marly Pierre Louis

**SoulSpeech | Back Cover**

# ONYX

SINCE 1972

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exists to be a voice for people of the African Diaspora and the greater Boston community in which we reside. The Onyx embraces the unity and values of diversity in both the content of our publication and in the membership of our organization.

## WINTER 2005 CORRECTIONS

Many of you wrote in and expressed your feelings and opinions of the last issue and in particular the "Reemergence of the Boston Greeks" piece. We thank you and always welcome your input.

Unfortunately, we missed a few mistakes and we extend our apologies to you our readers. They are as follows:

***In the piece "Kappa Alpha Psi Incorporated" the name of the organization should have appeared as their full title, Kappa Alpha Psi Incorporated, versus the Kappas.***

***Also in this piece, after the founders and before valued should be of Indiana University.***

***Phi Iota Alpha Fraternity Incorporated should not have appeared under the Divine Nine heading. Its heading was accidentally not printed and should have been titled as Latino Fraternities.***

***Alpha Rho Lambda Sorority Incorporated should not have appeared under the Divine Nine heading. Its heading was accidentally not printed and should have been titled as Latina Sororities.***

Note: We only included groups that responded to our outreach efforts. We apologize to those organizations who have felt that they were overlooked.

Thank you and again we extend our apologies.

The opinions and feelings expressed in *The Onyx Informer* are not necessarily those of the Onyx staff or of the Northeastern administration.

The Onyx is a publication run by undergraduate students who oversee all aspects of operations involving the publication.

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# Deeply Inspired

There are many Black revolutionaries, intellectuals, artists and politicians who have taught us to never settle without a fight, but I find too often that we overlook the people at home who always give us hope and remind us of the potential that lies in our minds and souls.

In March of 2004, I lost one of my big sisters. Naila was my inspiration throughout my teenage years. At the tender age of 22, she succumbed to an illness but she left behind a beautiful daughter, my niece Mishaliz. Naila had her daughter when she was 18, graduated from college when she was 22, got her own apartment, loved her family and had begun training to work for the United States Social Security office. But too soon after, her dreams were taken away from her.

Although I wish everyday that she was here with me to celebrate the holidays, the graduations and the births, I know now that I have a guardian angel. Through her death I have learned to appreciate all the little things in life.

I have learned to remain positive despite all the obstacles thrown my way. I have learned that life is what you make it. Although I wish she could buy the house that she had her eye on and see her daughter graduate from high school, I know

that her spirit lives in those who carry her memory. She is my inspiration to be grateful for the things that we too often take for granted – things we know we shouldn't, like our health and most importantly, our families.

On our calendars, we are given one month to honor those who have endured immense racism and brutality. But, as I get older, I realize one month isn't enough time to pay tribute to Black legends. It's not fair to honor only those who have made it into our history books. We should pay tribute to all those who have had an impact on our lives – those whose struggles and hardships never made it on paper, but somehow touched our hearts and made us see that we can accomplish what ever our hearts desire.

People, like my sister Naila, (who refused to be just another teenage-Latino with a baby), or Thelma Golden, (the first Black curator at the prestigious Whitney Museum of American Art in New York), give people hope that settling is not the only option. The road was not easy for either one of them and although we may not read about them in our history books they have created a path that others can follow. They didn't settle. If they did, what would they have ever accomplished?

So yes, celebrate the pioneers like Coretta Scott King and Thurgood Marshall, those who also refused settle, but don't forget the little people we may bypass everyday who give us inspiration to become more than what the system has designed for us.

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# Edutainment

by Ivelisse Sanchez

movies  
music  
**BOOKS**  
theater  
tv

Ed Bullins is an award-winning playwright and inspiring community activist. He has a long history with the arts and black political movements that dates back to the 1960s and 1970s. Bullins has worked with great contributors to Black art including Eldridge Cleaver, Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez and Huey Newton. He continues to write plays and teach a playwriting class to Northeastern University students as a Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at the Center for the Arts. His more recent work, a musical remix to his award-winning play *The Taking of Miss Janie*, entitled *Janie's Song* will be featured at Blackman Auditorium on February 24 and 25 at 8 pm.

Ed can be described as a man in touch with his history and the history of his people. His cool vibe emanates throughout his home—with waxed hardwood floors and slow jazz tunes drifting from the stereo. The display of African art encased in glass and the magnificent grandfather clock makes his home relaxing and inviting, while the awards and old photographs presented on the walls and the variety of books filling the bookcases reveal that Bullins is also an intellectual. His home seems to reflect his demeanor—relaxed with an air of quiet confidence.

He does not appear to be a man in a hurry. Ed may be 70 years old, but he still has inspiring ideas to make a reality and

wonderful plays to write. He is an intellectual man who often incorporates social commentaries in his plays and attracts audiences from both sides of the color line. Ed says his musical play *Janie's Song* remains “a metaphor for black and white conditions in America. It's about a struggle between the races and the sexes. It's about

speaking out and challenging the status quo in society in the era it appears. I just updated old icons.”

Valerie Stephens, the star of Ed's new play *Harlem Diva* and all-around performer, felt Bullins was being too humble.

“Did he tell you he was building a theatre in Roxbury?” she asked. Bullins lowered his head and laughed, “No I didn't Miss Stephens.”

He is currently working to find a location for his Roxbury Crossroads Theatre and is looking into Hibernian Hall in Roxbury's Dudley area. Valerie said, “This area needs it. I need it. It's so important. I can't think of one place where I can say this is my home. [The theatre] will be where our presence is felt.”



*Harlem Diva* is the play that Ed is planning to premiere at the opening of his theatre and Valerie, after years of not acting, is very excited to make the theatre a reality.

With a rich history and promising future, Ed Bullins can be described as one of Northeastern's hidden gems. He is an accomplished Black playwright who still gives back to the community by opening his home to those who wish to learn from him and working to provide a new home for Boston's Black actors, writers, fans and performers.

And as a strong believer in multiculturalism, Ed says “As with all my plays, I want to attract audience members of all cultures, but most importantly, I want to see them get involved in theatre, literature, and poetry. I want them to experience some of that for themselves.”





# Edutainment

by Sophia Dauphin | Photos by Craig Bailey

movies

**MUSIC**

books

theater

tv



*Souls of Black Folk* took place on February 1, 2006 at the Blackman auditorium. There were many performers ranging from storytellers, spoken word to tap dancers. As I sat there viewing these performances, I was intrigued by what my eyes witnessed: the movements of my tap dancing sisters, the sound of a distinct voice, the melody by the jazz musicians, and the powerful images displayed on the screen. I could not shut my eyes because I did not want to miss a second of the events that were taking place on stage.

Although there were many outstanding pieces, the spoken word by Jeremiah Shepherd was the most poignant and touching to me. It was not only his words that stunned me, but his use of tone. In his monologue, Jeremiah was talking about the lost of black history and retrieving it. For instance, there was one point when he compared the Harlem Renaissance to today's black culture. He compared jazz to hip hop, his mic to Langston Hughes'

Langston Hughes, Josephine Baker, etc) represented him, but if the world cannot recognize his people's achievements, then who is he? Jeremiah made me forget that I was part of the audience. I felt immersed in his language as he tried to discover his black identity. He ended his monologue with the line: "tell me why is black so beautiful," and I exhaled.

This piece was so captivating to me because it made me ponder about black history and black people. We have heard it over and over: slavery, Civil Rights movement, racism, and many more

## Souls of Black Folks

mic, poetry to graffiti, his baggy jeans to a suit, and explained how he carries a bag full of trial and tribulations. He is living in present America but still faces hardships as an African American; he still needs to justify his talent to the rest of the world. He felt as if the past legends (i.e. Harriet Tubman,

issues. Our peoples' experiences are what make us unique. Jeremiah's piece is an insight of the Harlem Renaissance. This turning point was important for blacks because it allowed us to self-express our talents through different forms of art. Poets, writers, singers, dancers, painters and other kind of artists emerged during this time. We were showing the world that we were black, beautiful, and strong. We had our own special talents and were gladly willingly to show to the rest of the world that we were more than "mammies", "sambo", and laborers. We were and still are a people of artistic and creative abilities.

To answer Jeremiah's question, why is black so beautiful? Because we are a people who have and still faced lynching, race riots, and unfair treatment but have always risen to the surface with our heads high.

*The event was made possible by the efforts of Northeastern's Black Student Association, Office of Special Support Services, John D O' Bryant African American Institute, Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, African American Studies Department, Resident Student Association, Mr. Michael Kilgerman, Mrs. Susan Lombardi-Verticelli and the Budget Review Committee.*



# Nobel or simply Noble

by Candice Springer

## What Does Oprah Really Do For Us?

We all know the basics. She's been an actress, head producer and host of her show for two decades, a movie and television show producer, magazine founder and editor, cable network co-creator (ever heard of the Oxygen Network?), generous philanthropist, and the first African American billionaire (net-worth last year: 1.1 billion dollars). It's like a story book fairytale. A black woman of humble beginnings from Kosciusko, Mississippi becomes a media trailblazer and ultimate barrier breaker. So is the life of Oprah Winfrey. She has risen to become one of the most revered public figures today.

Now fans and supporters are pushing for Winfrey to become the next Nobel Peace Prize winner—an achievement far surpassing any award she has received to date. We're all sadly familiar with the crazy man jumping on her couch, but the news of a potential Nobel Peace prize may come as quite a shock. Is Winfrey worthy of an award that exemplifies a passionate dedication to peace through more than just altruistic giving? Some have argued that she has lost sight of where she came from and therefore couldn't fit a "pursuer of peace" title. Consider what audience she targets on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Consider who can honestly afford a \$690 dollar Burberry coat on the 2005 favorite things list. Consider who really cares about Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes. Well, that's just a little joke.

But seriously, at first glance it seems like Oprah caters to a rich, white female audience. If this is the case, what does Winfrey really do for us, her own people, and is everything she's done been worthy of an award bestowed upon people like Martin Luther King Jr., Desmond Mpilo Tutu, Nelson Mandela, and Kofi Annan?

Winfrey's life wasn't always about celebrity guests and her outrageously expensive "favorite things." According to *Time Magazine*, she was able to read

at age two. She started school at age five and skipped to the third grade at age 6. Though she had bright prospects she was met with hardships. She was molested as a child. She also became pregnant when she was only 14 and lost her son shortly after his birth. Despite it all, Winfrey managed to graduate from high school and became the youngest person and first African-American to anchor the news at WTVF-TV in Nashville. From there the path was set. This is the part of her story that many never know. So when we see Winfrey making authors like James Frey famous, getting interior decorating tips from Nate Berkus, or giving 276 Pontiac G6s to members of her audience it may be hard to imagine her staying grounded.

But beyond the celebrity factor, Winfrey has been a philanthropic powerhouse. She has donated millions to organizations world-wide through her private charity, The Oprah Winfrey Foundation. Oprah's Angel Network, created in 1998, has raised over \$35 million for non-profit charities all over the world. Recently, she donated \$10 million to victims of Hurricane Katrina. She has launched a formidable and compelling campaign to capture flagrant sex offenders, offering anyone \$100,000 to anyone who turns them in. She also recently honored African-American women who have led the way for others in her legends weekend, which culminated in the Legends Ball, a very distinguished and upscale white tie gala.

Winfrey is also firmly dedicated to the well-being and education of children. In 1993, the "Oprah Bill," establishing the creation of a catalog of convicted child molesters, was signed in 1993. The Oprah Winfrey Scholars Program provides scholarships to children intent on giving back to their community. Her work in South Africa continues to give hope to countless numbers of girls, providing them with the opportunity

to excel in academics when the future "Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls—South Africa" opens in 2007. This comes after Winfrey traveled personally to South Africa, where she showered 50,000 children with Christmas gifts in December 2002. These are only a highlight of her contributions in addition to her determination to empower, enlighten, and excite her viewers daily.

Whether her achievements are worthy of a Nobel Peace Prize is up for debate, but with so many charities, it's a wonder how Winfrey continues to give in new ways. Perhaps giving back is her way of staying true to her roots. Her devout vow to convict sexual predators has served to prevent children from suffering the abuse she had to endure. Her constant emphasis on education may be motivated by the effect of education impacting her own success. What is certain is that Winfrey has been motivated, despite the fame and fortune, to help those less fortunate.



Oprah in Africa

[www.myhero.com](http://www.myhero.com)

"Though I am grateful for the blessings of wealth, it hasn't changed who I am," Oprah once said. "My feet are still on the ground. I'm just wearing better shoes."



# spotlight

**M**y birth name is Katrina Willaims-Gooding, but during my freshman year in college I chose the name Xpository. It comes from the word "expository" which mean "a setting forth of meaning or intent." The name represents my personality and my lyrical style because that's what I do - I make the hidden unfold and I make the guilty feel guilt. I spit the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Most present-day rappers spit about their material possessions: the cars, the money, the jewels, and now more than ever, their "[expletive] and hoes."

If there is one thing about my lyrical style that makes me unique, it's that I'm versatile when it comes to my lyrics. Contrary to most rappers, 90% of my lyrics discuss positive messages catered toward the Black community. I guess you could say I take after Kanye West. He can rap about the streets but flip it and start rapping about issues that concern the black community while throwing in a few bars about government corruption. I send messages through my lyrics and let people decipher the truth through my words, while giving them the opportunity to read through the lines.

To date, I have performed poetry and spoken word at Beatless, which was held in the Curry Student Center Ballroom, and at the Onyx's SOUL-SPEECH, held at the African-American Institute. I have also participated in a couple of talent shows and in front of anyone who wants to hear me.

As far as my rapping career goes, my main goal is to become affiliated with

the R.O.C. But, if I do, it won't change me. I will always give back to my Boston community and to others that need it. Although I haven't had the pleasure of having any professional experience, meaning I haven't recorded in a real studio, I did record a song in one of my friend's makeshift studio, using his computer. It was so much fun and after I was done, I realized that was the first time I was able to hear myself spit and it was amazing.

Being a female, people automatically think I'm wack, assuming that I'm going to spit about how fat my [expletive] is and what I can do with it. But I prove them wrong. I don't have to talk

me and whenever or wherever I perform, they are sitting in the audience cheering me on.



**"My nephew thinks it's cool to get shot 9 times 'cause 50 Cent put it in one of his rhymes..."**

about sex to make people listen. I believe that the word "rap" symbolizes rhythm and poetry. Commercial artists like

50 Cent have lost sight of that. I love to rap and although I've only been doing it for a year, my lyrics make people think and put smiles on people's faces. My mother and my girls always stand behind

When it all comes down to it, I have to thank "The Shop" for letting me record in their "studio" and giving me the confidence that I need to go forward.

*Xpository*



# An Evening With James McBride

By Margaret Kamara

The Center for the Arts sponsored an event that featured award winning author, journalist and musician James McBride. The event, titled *The Color of Water: A Meditation on Identity*, gave advice, humor and a jazz concert for the audience ranging from college students to senior citizens.

McBride greeted his audience by thanking them for buying the novel: "I bought a new car because of you," he said. He warmed the audience up for what was in store by giving a brief lecture on his music, writing background, and his memoir, *The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*. The audience sat up straight for a lesson in current events and the book that topped *The New York Times'* bestseller for more than two years.

The memoir, published in sixteen languages and twenty countries, sold 1.7 million copies in the United States. "I wrote *Color of Water* because I had to write it," McBride said. "I had to find myself... When I was working with *The [Boston] Globe* my friend Eugene and I were talking. He asked me where I was from and somehow it came up that my mother was white. He said you should write a book; you don't want to be a schmuck like me. You might make millions. So I did. I did not make millions, but I made a lot."

The story, narrated by both James McBride and his mother, Rachel, tells the story of how his mother, a white Jewish woman born in Poland but raised in the South, fled from her abusive rabbi father to Harlem. She married a black man, who later died just before James, the eighth child, was born. Rachel remarried, but was widowed for the second time, leaving her to raise twelve children on her own with the help of social securi-

ty. The story tells of this and of the racial struggles both mother and child face trying to find their identity in a black and white world.



While promoting his book on National Public Radio, one of James McBride's maternal cousins, had been listening and called in. The two got together and reunited their mothers after fifty years of separation.

Before proceeding to the main part of the event, the Jazz ensemble, McBride gave a few words of wisdom to the students in the audience. "When you fail in school it does not mean you are dumb or

stupid. It means you have to try harder," he said. "The fact that you are here means you have succeeded. Now learn to fail. *The Color of Water* is one of my successes, but I have failed a lot."

In the five piece jazz ensemble mini concert, McBride played the saxophone, and was accompanied by his band members; Keith Robinson (vocals), Sarah Jane Cion (piano, vocals), Damon Due White (drums), Calvin Jones (bass), and Abdou Mboup (percussion.) He took the audience back with old melodies, which he dedicated to the troops in Iraq, journalists who have sacrificed their lives to deliver true news to the American people, and the concepts of love and peace. The audience left Blackman Auditorium with wide smiles and a sense of satisfaction. The evening concluded with a book and CD signing.

# *The Onyx* REMEMBERS

## *Coretta Scott King: Our First Lady*

By Margaret Kamara

Though Coretta Scott King may carry the surname of a man that needs no introduction, she had also established a name for herself, which was not the wife of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Before she married King Jr., she had expressed her independent perspective by demanding that the Reverend Martin Luther King, Sr., remove the promise to obey her husband from the wedding vows. She gave her reason for marrying King on an interview with the National Public Radio, "I married Martin Luther King Jr. because I came to love him after I met him. But also I married the cause that we both shared in..." She continued carrying their legacy from the day he was assassinated, on April 4, 1968, till her death on January 30, 2006 from ovarian cancer.

Born on April 27, 1927, in Heilberger, Alabama, and raised on her family farm, Coretta Scott was exposed to the injustices of life in a segregated society at an early age. She walked miles a day to attend the one room Crossroads School in Alabama while the white students rode buses to an all white school near by. She graduated first in her class in 1945, and got a scholarship to Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio. Coretta joined the Antioch chapter of the NAACP and the college's Race Relations and Civil Liberties Committee. She graduated from Antioch with a B.A. in education and music, and won a scholarship to study concert singing at the New England Conservatory.

A year after meeting Martin Luther King, Jr., a theology student at Boston University, the two were married on June 18, 1953. Coretta Scott King completed her degree in voice and violin at the New England Conservatory. Then the young couple moved on September 1954 to Montgomery, Alabama, where Martin Luther King Jr. had accepted an appointment as Pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. From then on the Kings' lives changed forever.

From the dramatic event that triggered the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement with Rosa Parks to the day God took her life, Coretta Scott King was so active that she would later earn the nickname the First Lady of the Civil Rights Movement. Although the demand of raising their four children, Yolanda Denise, Martin Luther III, Dexter Scott, and Bernice Albertine, was her first priority she still played an essential role in the cause for justice and equal rights for all. She conceived and performed a series of Freedom Concerts, where she combining poetry, narration and music to tell the story of the Civil Rights Movement. Her concerts funded Martin's Southern Christian Leadership Conference organization.

Mrs. King began taking up major roles in the movement as her husband's reputation grew worldwide. She accompanied

Martin on a trip to celebrate the independence of Ghana in 1957, a pilgrimage to India in memory of Mahatma Gandhi in 1959, and to Oslo, Norway, where he received the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1964. Mrs. King found herself in popular demand as a public speaker. She became the first woman to deliver the Class Day address at Harvard, to preach at a statutory service at St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and to become a liaison to international peace and justice organizations. This was even before Dr. King took a public stand in 1967 against United States intervention in the Vietnam War.

After her husband's assassination in Memphis, Tennessee, Coretta made it her obligation to continue the legacy that had made them one. Three weeks after his death, she even gave an address at an anti-Vietnam War rally using notes found in King Jr.'s pocket. On June 26, 1968 Coretta founded the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Center in Atlanta, which opened to the public in 1981. It became the first institution built in the memory of an African American leader. In 1986 she led the successful campaign that established Dr. King's birthday, January 15, as a national holiday in the United States.

The contributions Coretta Scott King has made to society far surpass what you have just read. Though she rests now in heaven, she will be forever missed and her legacy will last forever.



[www.stanford.edu](http://www.stanford.edu)



# The Onyx REMEMBERS

## Richard Pryor

By Christine Williams

His real name was Richard Franklin Lennox Thomas Pryor. His grandmother was a madam. His mother was a prostitute. He lived in their brothel. At the age of six, he was raped by a teenage neighbor, and at a later age, he was molested by a priest during catechism.

Of all things, who would have thought this boy would grow up to be a comedian????

Moreover, who would have thought this comedian would change history?

Richard Pryor may be criticized for his personal shortcomings, but he was more than just a man with a drug addiction and a fondness for racial epithets. Through stories about winos, junkies, and drifters, Pryor was able to introduce the black underclass to white America. And it wasn't the punch lines that made him funny or that made him famous his special talking the truth that a legend. Pryor told that black people ously kept to themselves was unabashed, unand explicit....but could say he wasn't. In fact, Richard's so much validity, the mocked found selves laughing the He received his tion from the lives of working-class black Americans, and presented them in his stand-up in such an overt, unapologetic way, that he forever shocked the American culture. Somewhere between challenging every boundary of decency and tact, Pryor's jokes also challenged American taboos and raised social consciousness. Richard had an uncanny way of making his audiences laugh and analyze at the same time. Robert Townsend once said: "Richard had that thing where he could make you laugh so hard and then all of a sudden...break your heart."

Beneath the surface of his jokes, Pryor addressed some of the deepest, most unspoken thoughts fears of the American people.

And Pryor was also more than just a comedian. He was also an actor, and starred in such films as *The Wiz* (1978), and *The Toy* (1982.) In 1972, he was even nominated for an Academy Award for his role in *Lady Sings the Blues* with Diana Ross. He also received five Grammy's and one Emmy, and was the



www.cbsnews.com

the puns - it ent of tell-made him the jokes had previ-selves. He censored, no one honest. jokes held that often t h e m - hardest. inspira-

and speech

first person to receive the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor.

Richard Pryor was the comic voice of an entire generation. He redefined how people thought about race, sex, and stand-up comedy. He created laughter that broke through centuries of indifference. I'm sorry to lose him, but I am comforted by the thought that somewhere up above, Richard Pryor's making heaven funny as hell.

## Stan "Tookie" Williams: Redemption Story

By Shantelle Anderson

Stanley "Tookie" Williams III was born on December 29, 1953 in New Orleans, Louisiana. At the age of six he moved to South Central Los Angeles, where he became known as a fighter and founder of the West Side Crips in South Central. However, Tookie firmly denied claims that the Crips gang had begun as a violent organization, saying that the Crips advocated for peace and brotherhood. He maintained his claim to innocence until his death on December 13, 2005 at 12:35 am.

In 1981 Tookie was convicted of four brutal murders; one taking place at a 7-Eleven near Whittier, California and the other three at the Brookhaven Motel. The prosecution's firearm expert declared that the shotgun shells found at both crime scenes came from a shotgun which was later found under the bed of a couple Tookie had previously lived with. However in reality, only the shells from the motel scene matched the gun found under the couple's bed.

Tookie and his attorneys continuously argued that there was no strong evidence. There were no fingerprints, no boot-prints, and, because there was not a single black juror, Tookie's defense attorney biased. ing lawyer, who was ing race as ing fac-selections, Tookie as in captiv-told the ju-him in his jury found and he was death.



www.mtv.com

felt the jury was The prosecut-Robert Martin, known for us-a determin-tor during jury referred to a "Bengal tiger ity in a zoo" and rors to imagine "habitat." The Tookie guilty sentenced to

While in prison, Tookie wrote children's books promoting non-violence and alternatives to joining gangs. His autobiography, *Blue Rage, Black Redemption*, was honored in the film

# The Onyx REMEMBERS

Redemption: The Stan Tookie Williams Story starring Jamie Foxx. Tookie was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for five consecutive years, 2001-2005. In his 2004 book, *Tookie Protocol for Peace*, he called for peace among gang rivals, the Bloods and the Crips. His positive behavior and proclaimed redemption led to a clemency campaign with the help of the NAACP, the Campaign to End the Death Penalty, and various celebrities, including Snoop Dogg and Jaime Foxx, to remove him from death row and allow him to have a retrial in November 2005. Thousands signed on-line petitions requesting California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to grant Tookie clemency. On December 9, 2005, the wife of the 7-Eleven victim stated that she supported Tookie's peace efforts and asked him to help her send a peace message, which would honor her husband's memory and Tookie's work.

Despite the campaign efforts, on December 12, 2005 Governor Schwarzenegger denied clemency for Tookie. Stanley Tookie Williams III was executed by lethal injection at San Quentin State Prison in California. On this same day new evidence released suggested that one of the witnesses was given Tookie's file to review and to master his handwriting to produce a fake confession. In an interview hours before his execution Tookie said: "Whether others choose to believe that I have redeemed myself or not, I worry not, because I know and God knows, and you can believe that all of the youths that I continue to help, they know, too. So with that, I am grateful...I say to you and everyone else, God Bless. So take care."

## *Lou Rawls: Gonna Miss Your Lovin'*

By Marsha White

Who are some of your parents' favorite R&B artists? For some, the likes include Barry White, Luther Vandross and the sultry and talented Lou Rawls. Singing the hit single "You'll Never Find Another Love Like Mine", Lou Rawls's spectacular four-octave range is fascinating and soothing to the listener's ear. His supernatural musical gift enchanted millions of people all over the world through vocal talent that is universally recognized and honored. Though his death, saddened fans and admirers, we must remember and celebrate his triumphant legacy and embrace his contributions that have facilitated African American progress.

Born Louis Allen Rawls in Chicago, Illinois on December 1, 1935, he was raised by his grandmother and the Baptist Church. His youth was spent singing in choirs and producing musical harmonies with his classmates in a group called the Teenage Kings of Harmony. He secured a friendship with popular music and found his musical niche. Performing became his second nature and he made his recording debut at the young age of 19.

After a fatal accident that almost left him comatose, Rawls turned to secular music for comfort and enrichment of the soul. In the early 60's, he was signed to Capitol Records and commenced his professional career singing back up for artists like Sam Cooke and even collaborating with American Bandstand's Dick Clark.

With a strong jazz influence, Rawls' first album, *Stormy Monday*, generated a multitude of fans. In 1967, he scored his first Grammy for Best R&B Vocal Performance for the song "Dead End Street." When he joined MGM, his album "All Things in Time" propelled his career with the smashing and memorable favorite "You'll Never Find A Love Like Mine". With other successive hits and albums throughout his lifetime, Rawls has sold over 40 million records.

Lou Rawls, will never be tremendous works. He the United Fund with his Telethon." importance education, he needed aid to American charitable given him a his native Rawls Drive.



[www.selu.edu](http://www.selu.edu)

although gone, forgotten for his and memorable raised money for Negro College "Parade of Stars Realizing the of a college granted much aspiring African students. His works have even street name in Chicago: Lou

Rawls was also a spokesperson for Anheuser Beush and was featured in many sitcoms, movies and independent films. As a man of many remarkable talents and strengths, Lou Rawls was an exemplary individual. Through his songs he taught us the true value of love while awakening our emotional spirits. Rawls voice is recognizable all over the diverse realms of the globe. He said farewell to this earth but left a tremendous impact on our generation. He illustrated throughout his life the definition of social contrivance. He provided for those in need and never lost sight of his humble roots.

Through his example, we must exercise the generosity that he bestowed upon many. His farewell to the world must never be overlooked as a goodbye, but, like a memory, relived day by day. To use some lyrics from his song:

*You're gonna, You're gonna miss (miss my lovin')  
You're gonna miss my lovin' (you're gonna miss my lovin')  
I know you're gonna miss my lovin' (you're gonna miss my lovin')  
You're gonna miss, you're gonna miss my lo-o-ove...*

Yes, Mr Rawls, We truly do miss your loving.



# HIV AIDS STDs

@Northeastern:

**THE UNTOLD STORY**

by LaDonna LaGuerre

The color stigma—of blackness, of brown skin, of people connected by indigo water and wood—is an endless trail. Like the Atlantic Ocean, stigmas and stereotypes, are cold, blue and plentiful: American illiteracy upheld by inner-city schools, crime perpetuated through hip-hop, drugs ruling the ghetto.

Sexuality is not a part of that stigmatic triumvirate, but there are plenty of misconceptions about how we do—about sexual practices and our culture.

### THE SITUATION

Research says that Blacks account for more cases of sexually transmitted diseases than any other racial or ethnic group in the country, covering an extensive range of possibilities, like HIV/AIDS or gonorrhea. Latinos, while not in as dire of a situation as blacks, still face the gravity.

For example, from the Centers for Disease Control and the Mass. Dept. of Public Health:

**Blacks, 12 percent of the U.S. population, made up half of the HIV/AIDS cases in 2004.**

**Thirty-nine percent of black women currently living in Massachusetts are HIV-positive.**

**In regards to both chlamydia and gonorrhea, nationally, blacks dominate the statistics.**

**Latino men are likely to contract HIV/AIDS through gay sex—29.6 percent of Latinos in Massachusetts contracted it through male-to-male contact.**

And so follows a heavy stigma: Blacks and Latinos appear as having tacitly claimed ownership of sexually transmitted diseases in America. As numbers and reports have ordained, we stay disease-ridden out of fear, ignorance and irresponsibility.

It's hard not to be wary of HIV/AIDS and STD surveillance reports and research papers sometimes—it's difficult to ingest, hard to digest, and to me, I'm wading through thick layers of reporting bias.

There is no contesting numbers, per se. Blacks, right now, are at highest risk of contracting every single sexually transmitted disease that exists. Latinos are increasingly toeing the danger zone. This is not a blame game, really, or a deflection of reality.

The skepticism is directly related to *how* data is reported, to what stories are being told—what is emphasized, what is downplayed, what groups are being looked at, what groups are better funded.

Mainstream resources, like the Centers for Disease Control or the National Institutes of Health as examples, provide scarce details about younger minorities and STDs. The reason is unclear. Could it be that there just isn't enough data? Possibly, though 61 percent of the U.S. population is older than 18 and younger than 65, sampling us seems simple. Could it be that data about younger Blacks and Latinos doesn't corroborate their current data about blacks generally? Not sure.

Whatever the reason, what results is a grim painting of black folks, with melancholy shades of blue and black brushstrokes overpowering the canvas.

My Diasporic peers, between the ages of 18 and 30: our canvas is blank. There simply is not enough data about us and STDs.

Not pleased with being crammed into a general statistic about black people and sexual health, having an inevitable spell cast upon my life, a hunt for alternative data I began: Where could I look for information that speaks to me? How do I relate to STDs?

Then I looked around. From a crumb-covered corner table in Shillman, nursing a lukewarm cup of coffee, I looked up from my newspaper and admired my surroundings—smiling brown faces, clasping black hands, cornrows, locks, hips, kinetic fluidity—and found the paint needed to add some strokes to our bare canvas.

### A SAMPLE OF SEXUALITY ON CAMPUS

A few weeks ago, I sampled an anonymous group of minority students on campus using an informal survey as a tool to find out what the people around me are doing or not. I was also curious about Generation Z, a generation my junior, to understand what the distant future holds. Titled HIV/AIDS/STDs on Campus, it started as a fractional effort toward discovering sexual practices on campus. It ended up saving me from a good ole mainstream American brain-washing.

It doesn't make sense to sit back and inherit information filtered through calculators, keypads and speculation. In fact, relying on a black and white method of reporting complex data is a dead-end street to narrow-minded thinking. Research obviously has its place and is dependable in monitoring conditions, but maybe an alternative would fill gaps—my gaps, at least.

### THE RESULTS

Let's get housekeeping out of the way. Here are the demographics:

**The survey was completed by thirty participants.**

**A majority of participants were 19-years-old. Three were 18, eight were 20, three were 21, and two was at least 23.**

**Eighty percent of test takers were female. Five men and 24 women contributed to the results.**

**This survey assessed sexual health, unintentionally, from a heterosexual perspective. About 93 percent of participants were straight. There was one homosexual and one bisexual participant.**

### Protection

We all hate clichés, and yet they sometimes perfectly describe circumstances. In this case, we think it is better safe than sorry. Condoms are commonplace for us. The responses indicate that diasporic Africans at NU all pretty much protect ourselves when engaging in sex—the kicker is that condoms aren't used consistently. While 13 participants always use condoms, a few use them occasionally. The good,



good news is that a 2003 CDC survey about youth risk behavior supports the notion that young Blacks and Latinos, particularly males, are cool with strapping up. Eighty-one and sixty-three percent, respectively, reported using them.

Protection is barely used during oral sex, according to our Northeastern survey. Nearly sixty-seven percent never use condoms or dental dams for this purpose.

The other majority percentages for each category, condoms during intercourse and condoms during oral sex, represent the abstinent population—those among us who are not currently sexually active.

### Sexual Style

How we, as Northeastern students of color, go about satisfying our urges has a major implication on our sexual health.

Our perspective on sex is mature and sensible. We care about whom with we connect physically, we seem to reject the historical stereotype and stigma of “the hypersexual African.” Smart choices lend to an increasingly healthy sexual life—increasingly, as juxtaposed to current mainstream research that says we do otherwise.

Twenty-four percent think of sex as being a central part of a relationship.

We are relationship people. One participant said, “I try not to have random sexual encounters. Ideally, I’d want to be in a committed relationship and both get tested before anything sexual happens.” Almost half said that one partner is enough, whether or not he or she is in a committed relationship.

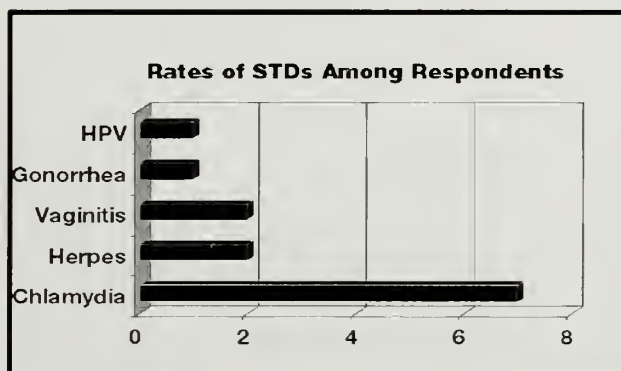
Fifty percent of respondents have had no more than two sexual partners. Most of the remaining fifty percent had 3-5 partners. Seventy percent have never had a one-night stand.

Awareness And Education

Though many survey participants were shy about sexually transmitted disease as a topic of conversation, mostly all understood the necessity of continuous education and communication internally and with partners and friends. Some research depicts blacks as unable to communicate about sexual health, “portraying black women as being passive and black men [as] vectors of disease,” said Sophie Godley of AIDS Action Committee in Boston.” We end up with one picture of blacks—it’s wrong.”

The results from this questionnaire break down that solitary representation.

We don’t look at sexual transmission of



diseases as a distant issue. All but four participants suggested they consider that possibility in making choices about sex. One person said, “I know that it is very important to be protected and I try to pass that knowledge onto my friends.” Another person expressed fear of the possibility of catching something: “Makes me scared.”

Our knowledge about safer sex appears to have mostly come about through parents, friends and school, suggesting free and open dialogue about sex in our communities.

We do, however, need to open the lines of communication between partners a bit more; we are scattered across the board and could work on unifying this aspect of our sex lives. “I’m perfectly comfortable talking about STD’s..... whatever it takes to stay safe” is what one person said and what many of us

should try to adopt. Twenty percent of respondents answered “not really” when asked if they talk about sexual health before sleeping together. Still, a majority answered “always” to this question.

The Nitty-Gritty

Three quarters of the “surveyed” have never had any type of sexually transmitted disease.

Of those who have had one, seven had chlamydia, 2 had herpes, 2 had vaginitis, 1 had gonorrhea and one had HPV (Human Papillomavirus).

Many said that they know or knew someone who has contracted a STD, some whom have died as a result.

What is the ultimate lesson to learn from the statistical horror that a sexual cesspool is drowning the Diaspora, as rendered by mainstream? Don’t believe the hype, exercise choice, explore independently and think unconventionally.

Your responses insinuated that the ultimate lesson involves education. The best and most effective—the only—way to deal with the sexual epidemic we face is by acquiring, sharing and creating information.

“All I want to say is that STD’s are so common now in this day and age. People should be aware of the consequences of their actions and become more educated about each STD. Please, everyone use condoms or get tested frequently,” is the advice one respondent bestowed upon her Northeastern peers.



# Boston

## HOMICIDES

HOW CAN WE RECLAIM OUR YOUTH  
AND OUR STREETS? by Ivelisse Sanchez



In the early 1990s Boston's homicide rate indicated that there were very serious issues with the inner-city youth. After hundreds of people were murdered, a community gathered its resources. People dedicated to eradicating the violence that was gripping Boston's streets came together, raised money and attempted to reclaim their city. This is when progress took its first steps.

Throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s Boston's homicide rate was one of the lowest in the country's metropolitan areas and this became known as the "Boston Miracle." But in 2005 that pride turned to utter confusion as the murder of 75 people, mainly Black and Latino males between the ages of 16 and 30, reached a ten year high.

This year's initiatives are working to curb the rising youth violence. Mayor Menino and the Boston Police are fed up with the increase of gun trafficking and have facilitated a partnership with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to investigate who is responsible for the growing number of illegal guns on the streets and how they end up in the hands of teens.

The Mayor has announced his Strategic Crime Council which will focus on education and community outreach, new legislation, and tougher penalties for gun related charges. He is also working to prohibit cameras and cell phones that are capable of photographing witnesses in courtrooms and to establish a dress code in response to the popular "Stop Snitchin'" t-shirt, which he believes, is a form of witness intimidation. In January, Menino launched a city-wide campaign that urged local fashion stores to take the shirts off their shelves.

Jelani Lewis, 20, doesn't believe the "Stop Snitchin'" shirts are a big deal; they are more of a mirror image of the inner-city community.

"People feel bad enough telling on other people," he said. "The 'Stop Snitchin'" shirts just reflect what we've already been taught in the hood."

But some youths do believe there are ways to promote non-violence. Tina, 16, who asked to be referred to by her first name only, believes it is a matter of giving

teens something positive to participate in.

"It's not that we want to get in trouble," she said. "A lot of us have no where to go and nothing to do after school so we do things that get us in trouble...it seems like older people just want to tell us what we are doing wrong, but don't want to give us something constructive to do." Funding for youth programs, at the federal and state levels, have endured the most extensive budget-cuts. The Bay State Banner article, "Community forum focuses on solutions to youth violence," printed on January 26, quoted Julio Henriquez, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative Board President as saying, "The greatest burden of this violence is being placed on young people."

Young people, when witnesses to violent crimes, strongly believe in the "code of silence" on the streets.

"People are out here bussin' [shots] all the time," Jerome, 17, said. "If the police think they can gain our trust just by saying they'll protect us, then they'll never get answers. I can't snitch and expect the police to be there...and, plus, I'm trying to finish high-school, not get shot."

Last year marked the Boston Police Department's homicide clearance rate, which is the number of cases in which there has been an arrest or a suspect identified, at its lowest point since 1993. In response to the rise of witness intimidation, Police Commissioner

allow the testimony to be turned over; (3) increases the mandatory sentence for illegal possession of a firearm from one year to 18 months; and (4) allots \$750,000- for the entire state of Massachusetts- for witness protection and relocation.

Sen. Dianne Wilkerson, D- Boston, expressed her disappointment with the "Anti-Gang Bill" in a January 26 editorial in the Bay State Banner. "The 'Anti-Gang' bill which the clergy supported does little more than extend the mandatory sentence for gun possession from one year to 18 months," she wrote. "Does anybody think this will stop the violence?" Wilkerson has also criticized the \$750,000 allotted to the Massachusetts' witness protection as "grossly inadequate" and called for \$1.25 million.

In the great effort to revive the "Boston Miracle," Tina hopes Boston's "older heads" don't forget about the young people.

"If they want to stop this cycle of violence, they need to go deeper than arresting everybody," she said. "They need to include us in the planning process so they can learn the best ways to approach us."

Considering that Black and Latino males from Boston's inner-city communities, primarily Dorchester, Mattapan and Roxbury, constitute more than 50 percent of the total number of deaths, there is something seriously wrong with this

picture. Our youth are forced to relive the cycle of violence as the public school system continues to fail them, their parents can't afford Boston's sky-high rent, and federal and state funding

for youth programs are the first to be eliminated. Community leaders, both elected and appointed, believed youth violence was solved in 1990s and forgot to invest in the children of today. It seems to that a teen resorting to violence is more than likely a teen screaming for something to do.

**"It's not that we  
want to get in  
trouble..."**

Kathleen O'Toole, Mayor Menino and local clergy members developed the "Anti-Gang Bill" which includes (1) expanding the category of who can be intimidated to include judges, prosecutors, police and defense attorneys; (2) barring grand jury testimony in gang-related cases from routinely being provided to the defense, although a defendant can ask a judge to

# Unified by the Diaspora, Divided by Ethnicity: What Threatens Our Unity

By Krisa Allen

Although most of us won't fess up to it, we all have our prejudices. Walking to class or studying in Snell, we look at those who surround us and without even knowing them we decide what we think they are. In the hustle and bustle we pick out who are "brothas" and "sistas" while passing our judgments and educated guesses. Finally, we come to the conclusion that he's Jamaican or she's Puerto Rican. For many of us, we shroud our identity in our countries of origin and are quick to flash our flags on the dance floor. This pressing question of who are we is embedded in our everyday lives whether it be filling in the race bubble on a standardized exam/application or answering the common question "What's your background?" My question is it wrong to be just black? What do you do when you have no flag to represent you?

Freshman Criminal Justice major Kevin Scales is one among many Black Americans who are of a long lineage stemmed from the slave trade. He cannot trace his country of origin and said, "It's not like with Jamaica for example where your culture is more out there, more available. My grandmother doesn't know what she is. She's just black. She doesn't know what country or what background she is." He also remarked on the difficulty of explaining to others his experience and helping them to understand that the only culture he has is some fried chicken. We are so eager to be recognized independently that we often forget the big picture that we are still of the African Diaspora, the dispersion of the African people from their homeland.

At Northeastern, we encounter a multitude of cultures, which has resulted in various cultural organizations. Although many of them stand for similar purposes, they continue to limit themselves by acting independently from one another. At NU we have approximately thirty-one

ethnic and cultural organizations; thirteen fall under the African Diaspora and all compete for membership, event turnout, etc. Under our black student organizations we have BAC, CVSA, NASO, NBSA, CSO, HSU, and LASO among others. LASO is the closest to being a complete collective of race, embodying all Latino/a ethnicities. CSO is near completion, hosting all ethnicities of the Caribbean except Haitian which represents itself in a separate organization (HSU).

"I don't think it's necessarily a bad thing having so many student organizations," said former LASO president Nadine Yaver. "But in a college environment where there aren't so many of us I think we benefit more from collaboration."

Legacy 2000 coordinator Mark Harvey from the Office of Special Support Services said, "I think there is a divide by black students with regards to subcategories. Not to step on anyone's toes but NBSA encompasses us all."

Although several efforts have been made in the past to build stronger bonds among the black students of NU, Harvey feels that it won't happen.

"...People are very proud of their ethnicity and hold on to their culture. Race is secondary to ethnicity when it should be the other way around," he said. "I think it can be done if people let go of their egos...I'm not saying students shouldn't have pride but there's a bigger umbrella and that umbrella is 'black'."

In just the past two years since I applied and was accepted to NU, the undergraduate application has changed. Now the question is not of race but of ethnicity. The options list is extensive with African American, Cape Verdean (non-Hispanic), West Indian, Haitian, and Latino listed under "Black." The options of African, Mexican American, South & Central American, Cuban, Puerto Rican,

and Dominican are listed under "Hispanic/Latino". Why is it necessary to have so many labels?

"[When asked about what I am] I just say I'm Puerto Rican. People forget 'black' is a color, not a race. For me it's easy to say that I'm Puerto Rican because it's easy for me to go to one source," said mid-dler Marketing/Communications major and LASO Treasurer Jonathan Hernandez. "Nowadays, they [people] wanna go deeper than just being black. Maybe it's the music: reggae, hip hop, reggaeton, salsa, these cultures have gotten stronger." However, Hernandez agrees that it does cause divisions saying, "...people want to be closer to those of their own backgrounds. In multicultural groups people [tend] to get into cliques. [From outside the box] I had a white friend say to me, 'It's all the same to me'."

Harvey agrees saying, "When you look in the mirror you don't see ethnicity, you see black...Are students, who are of the African Diaspora afraid of being black?"

On the other hand, having so many groups allows the opportunity to spread knowledge and educate others beyond what's natural. There's the opportunity to share your culture in hopes of generating respect and understanding of people on campus and even those beyond Northeastern. It's about providing a perspective some would otherwise have not been able to access.

Whether playing the ethnicity card is beneficial or not is up for debate. In theory, I could say combining more groups will strengthen the bonds of black folk and therefore our impact. However, that is easier said than done. America has long been a place where we, the Black race, were told that we were always below standard. Although the delivery of the message is subtle now, the message still echoes the same.

As Harvey has said, "It has a lot to do with race relations in this country...it stems from the atrocities we've grown up with."





www.rottentomatoes.com

# COMMERCIALIZATION of Political Martyrs

By Makieya Kamara

How many people know who Assata Shakur is? When a group of teenagers were asked, they replied quickly, "Tupac's mother!" and can not be convinced otherwise. How many people know who Amilcar Cabral is? And Mumia Abu-Jamal? How many people really know what Ernesto Rafael Guevara che la Serna really stood for? Few today can say they have heard these names spoken. If they have, most can barely utter two sentences about their struggle and their accomplishments. These men and woman are revolutionaries. A revolutionary can be defined as a person in pursuit of social or political change. Often this may have a negative connotation. They are seen as people who "stir" up trouble when in fact they attempt to fix the troubles plaguing their countries.

Most are not familiar with Amilcar Cabral, but the music industry, Hollywood, and everyday people have made Stan "Tookie" Williams a household name. Stan William's case should have forced us as a people to examine the injustices in the United States Government. It should have made us look at those who are still behind bars for so called "crimes" with no evidence. It should have forced us to look at those who have been in jail for over twenty years, beaten and mistreated, denied parole, and threatened. However, the Stan Williams case seems to be yet another fad and another breakfast topic to soon vanish from all memory.

Many paste the images of Che Guevara on t-shirts and baseball caps to be "in style"; not really knowing his story. As soon as Jay Z stepped out "reppin" the Cuban revolutionary, every one raced to follow suit. Much like Stan Williams, Che Guevara became a current trend, something straight out of "urban fashion." Few really understood the issues and ideals that came with this man, what he stood for, what he believed.

How many have heard of the "Free Mumia" movement? His plight still remains silent and his name a mystery among the masses. Mumia Abu-Jamal even advocated for the release of Williams as well as many others including Assata Shakur. So why is it that these have not become household names and are not synonymous with justice?

It seems as if it only becomes a worthy cause if someone famous makes mention of it. A great man once said, "If you stand for nothing, you fall for everything." Hopefully, our people will develop a quest for knowledge and an itch to explore. Then the trends can begin to end and our support will be genuine.

Amilcar Cabral [www.vozdipovo-online.com](http://www.vozdipovo-online.com)





# Che Guevara

by Jose De La Rosa

Legendary Latin-American revolutionary leader, Ernesto "Che" Guevara de la Sernas, was born in Rosario, Argentina to an upper-middle class family on June 14, 1928. His life was an adventurous one, but a short one too. He was murdered and killed in 1967 in Bolivia, though his legacy still lives.

It lives on so much in fact that a journal Guevara kept while traveling across South America on a motor bike with his best friend was adapted into the cinematic release of *The Motorcycle Diaries* (2004). In short, the movie depicts the adventures of the two friends as they travel from country to country. More importantly, it portrays the transition of Guevara the medical student to Che the revolutionist. It was during this critical trip across the continent that Guevara's passions and ideals evolved.

Guevara did not lead the typical, active life of most children. Rather, in his youth, Guevara became an avid reader. He read widely. Among his reading list were works by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. During his years at the University of Buenos Aires pursuing a medical degree, he read Stalin and Mussolini but did not join any radical student organizations. In 1953 he graduated from the University of Buenos Aires as a doctor and left his life of comfort and privilege motorcycle bound with his friend.

On his travels, he witnessed the excruciating poverty and lack of education that consumed Peru. He also witnessed the suppression, police brutality and violent breakdown of the political system in Colombia, and observed discrimination, racism, and poverty throughout Venezuela. As a result of his motorbike journey, his radical views strengthened. He became a Marxist and cultivated associations with leftist movements in Bolivia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru and Guatemala.

After witnessing the American intervention in Guatemala in 1952, Guevara's changed his approach to radical change by violent revolution. While in Mexico in 1954, Guevara was introduced to various Cuban exiles including Fidel Alejandro

Castro Ruz, a lawyer who was active in politics and was secretly plotting a second armed uprising against the corrupt-ed totalitarianism regime of Fulgencio Batista.

Together, Guevara and Castro began a revolution towards Socialism.

They made their base in the mountains of Sierra Maestra, attacking garrisons and recruiting peasants to the revolutionary army. As a strategy to recruit, gain support and expose President Batista, Guevara used the local radio station and created a journal called, "Cuba Libre" (Free Cuba). During this time, Guevara rose to the rank of major and led one of the forces that invaded central Cuba in late 1958.

**"Just shoot,  
you coward...  
you are only going  
to kill a man."**

As the movement took its course, the general public began to take notice of, and support La Revolución (The Revolution). Finally, on December 31, President Batista fled from Cuba to the Dominican Republic, leaving the presidency open for Castro.

After serving various positions within Castro's administration, Guevara decided to spread the revolution across South America, but he was unsuccessful. As he was gaining popularity in the outskirts of Bolivia, he was detained and later killed on October 9, 1967 at the age of 39. His desire for social change was, and is still, respected by many.

It's speculated that the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was linked to his assassination. According to some sources, his last words just before he was murdered were, "I know you are here to kill me. Just shoot, you coward! You are only going to kill a man."

The spirit and passion of Che Guevara continues to live with people all over the world. Ironically, capitalist entities have continuously used his image and popularity to profit on paraphernalia and fashion products. One can only hope that those who wear the image of his face on a t-shirt aren't just following the latest fashion trend, but rather, to appreciate and represent a legendary Latin-American revolutionary leader.

[www.mibasquiedo.com.ar](http://www.mibasquiedo.com.ar)



by Makieya Kamara

Mumia Abu-Jamal is an award winning journalist and a former president of the Philadelphia Society of Black Journalists. He joined the Black Panther Party at the young age of 15, as the Minister of Information. He was one of the few journalists that would write about the "MOVE" organization, which was a controversial group at the time. In his decision to do so, he revealed the Philadelphia police department's misconduct and abuse. Society ostracized him to the point where he had to drive a cab to make ends meet.

[www.freemumia.com](http://www.freemumia.com)



One night in 1981, while working, he saw his brother being beaten by two police officers. The stories vary at this point. One of the officers said Mumia shot his partner, Officer Daniel Faulkner, while Mumia said something completely different. He remains adamant that someone from the crowd shot at the officer. He was also shot during the incident. Although the hospital was only three blocks from the scene, it took them forty minutes to arrive at the hospital.

There were many disparities in Mumia's case that caused uproar within the black community. Witnesses saw two men running from the scene but police officers ignored them to beat Mumia. A witness also testified to being harassed and pressured by the police. Two months after the incident, police said they had "forgotten" that Mumia had confessed in the ER, even though the ER doctor

stated that Mumia never spoke. Officer Faulkner was shot with a different type of gun than the licensed gun found in Mumia's possession. At the trial, he was given an incompetent lawyer who was later disbarred. Evidence was withheld and witnesses were intimidated. The prosecutor stated that Mumia should be given the death penalty based on his political writings and because he was a member of the Black Panther Party. He was convicted and has been on death row for over twenty years, initially scheduled for execution on August 17, 1995. However, it has been pushed back several times since.

Mumia is now in his fifties. He is a father of three children and a grandfather of three. He has received awards and honors due to his writing gift as a journalist. He has written two books, *Live from Death Row* & *Death Blossoms*. His attorney also wrote a third book, *Race for Justice*, and received many awards in recognition. Mumia's case for freedom has been supported by Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, the European Parliament, Amnesty International, Pope John Paul II, and more. His case is currently on appeal in the Federal District Court in Philadelphia.

Assata Shakur was a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the Black Panther Party, and one of the founding members of the Black Liberation Army. She has been arraigned nine times and convicted only once. The other trials resulted in acquittals, a hung jury, and dismissals. She was under severe surveillance and targeted by the infamous Cointelpro program run by the FBI. On May 2, 1973, she was one of three pulled over by the New Jersey police. She was shot twice and charged with murder. While in the hospital, she was terrorized, beaten, and threatened by police officers. Assata's family and lawyer were kept from seeing her. When they were allowed, it was only for a few

minutes. The facts surrounding her case were suspicious. Three different medical examiners stated that Assata had been paralyzed immediately following a shot she received from behind while kneeling. The prosecution never brought forth evidence to state otherwise, but repeatedly argued that she shot a police officer. Despite inconsistencies and conflicting testimonies on the state's side, Assata was still convicted. She remained in jail for six and half years, all of which were riddled with abuse and violence. During this time, she gave birth to her daughter.

In 1979, with the help of friends within the prison, Assata Shakur escaped and has been in exile since. The United States government has done everything possible to get her back in the country. Their tactics included writing to Pope John Paul II in 1997, asking him to persuade Fidel



Castro to send Assata back. The government has even gone so far as to offer a one million dollar bounty for her return.

Although exiled, Assata continues to reach out to the black community through poetry, articles, and letters. She still advocates for the freedom of her longtime friend, Sundiata Acoli, as well as others such as Mumia Abu-Jamal.



# ¡Por Ahora, Estoy Tica!

by Marly Pierre Louis

Stepping off the plane at Juan Santamaria Aeropuerto in San Jose, Costa Rica, all I could think of was: here we go again. Once again I would be a lone stranger in a foreign land, once again be clueless to social mores and customs and once again wonder: "What the heck am I doing here?!"

Costa Rica (Rich Coast, so named by the conquering Spaniards because they incorrectly thought the land rich with gold) is famous not for its culture but for its exquisite and exotic natural beauty. There were never many indigenous peoples here nor a distinctive culture and what little there was, was wiped out by disease and murder at the hands of Spanish conquistadors. The small Indian population put up a fight but had no defense against cholera and the almighty sword. Costa Rica's true wealth lies not in its gold but in its lush and rich landscape, its bubbling volcanoes, scaling mountains and diversity in flora, fauna, birds and wildlife.

In my short time here, my most exciting discovery has been the people. Ticos (People from Costa Rica) are famous for their generosity and friendliness. From my experience they are so much more. "Pura Vida!" a national greeting that invokes positivity and happiness, in a nutshell describes its people. With a ready smile, Ticos are personable and lively. Upon visiting friends and extended family of my host family, I was introduced as "una amiga de Estados Unidos (a friend from the United States)" and always greeted with abrazos y besos. Like a proud mama, my host mother, never misses an opportunity to detail everything about me and proclaims that I'm a true Tica because "ella come todo! (she eats everything!)" Family life is really important here. All meals are eaten together and elders are treated with utmost reverence and respect. Husbands and wives, mothers and daughters, even friends and strangers, all lovingly refer to each other as "mi amor". Costarricense men are respectful but not shy about expressing their appreciation for a beautiful woman and seem to be quite enamored with dark skin. Upon walking by a "morenita bonita!" or an appreciative, "mi amor!" can be expected. At the pool one day a sexy, tanned lifeguard approached me, "Que cheba es su colour, me encanta morenitas! (Your color is so cool, I love black women!)" what more could I say but "muchas gracias"?

As all the familiar feelings of acclimation into another culture returned from my voyage to Ghana, a new and unsettling feeling dawned on me in my first weeks in Costa Rica: speechlessness. Freedom of expression takes on a whole new meaning when you cannot speak the language of the people. It's almost oppressive. With so much to say and a limited vocabulary to verbalize it, I have to say, it keeps me in the moment. I actually have to be attentive to what's being said as well as pay attention to the facial expressions and non verbal cues of the speaker - things that none of us tend to do very much or very well. Luckily my four years of high school Spanish have gotten me

this far and my host family and friends that I've made are ready and willing teachers. Fluency is in sight.

Some have asked how this experience compares to my time in Ghana. All I can say to that is, apples and oranges... they can't be compared. The two countries are as opposite as night and day in most respects. The distinctive culture of Ghana couldn't be overlooked even if you tried. And why would you? Ghana's retainment of its indigenous languages and foods, traditional clothing and religions, spirit invoking music and dancing is what made me fall in love with my new home on a daily basis and what makes me continue to long for it now. On the opposite side of the globe, San Jose could be a tropical, Spanish speaking version of any U.S major city. Traces of indigenous languages or cultures are rare, the people sport all the latest fashions of their Western counterparts, listen to most of the same music, and the country is about 90% Roman Catholic with no trace of ancestral Indian religions. The transportation system is developed, regulated and very comfortable in contrast to Ghana's cramped, hectic and often confusing (for foreigners) "tro tro" system. Although there are the occasional street vendors and market days, most Ticos do their shopping in supermarkets similar to Stop and Shop and malls similar to Copley, while Ghana's vibrant, bustling, hustling and extensive open air markets can keep you busy (and jubilantly confused) for days. Also, many Ghanaians, though proud seem to be in awe of "oboroni's" (foreigners) and maintain the golden paved roads image of America (which can be attributed to the internationally exported image of America through the all mighty media), Ticos are unimpressed by "gringos" (foreigners) and possess an unswaying pride in their land and people. With all their cultural differences the two countries share many things characteristic of African and Latino culture abroad: jovialness and positivity (Pura Vida!), a strong sense of community and family, an appreciation for the beauty of their tropical habitations and an unapologetic love of rice!

Admittedly, upon arrival I was disappointed by the lack of cultural distinction in Costa Rica and was nostalgic for my four month love affair with West Africa. But quickly the beauty of this country, its food (delicioso!) and especially its people has won me over and I find myself falling more and more in love with my new home everyday. As my halting Spanish progresses I'm discovering the things that make Costa Rica and its people the gem of Central America. With my improved Spanish, comes the freedom to move around the country independently and once again I'm left speechless; but this time by the awesome beauty of the land; its wild and mysterious rainforests, volatile and spectacular volcanoes and serene, romantic beaches. I'm excited about the next two months and giddy with the anticipation of exploration, inspiration and self reflection that I've found can only be achieved through international travel. And though I miss home; ¡Por ahora, estoy Tica!



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## MAN I AM YOUR WOMAN

When you look into her eyes what is it that you see? What has changed throughout the course of history...in this woman you should see a reflection of yourself, is that a possibility that is so unknown, then why look to your own reflection and refer to it as a hoe? Are we so lost in ourselves blinded by the pains of society that we forget that it is in the strength of a woman why we now breathe?

When you look into her eyes if it is not yourself you see then why not great women that have paved a way to creating your identity? Why not the greatness of your mothers who sang you that lullaby at night...or your grandmother who took the family in for shelter during times of suffering and strife?

If it is not these women you see then imagine the future...your seed....yes your daughters become women too...and that is the faith and the irony in the revolution of the negative that you do....for when another man calls your daughter a bitch...for reasons beyond her capacity say not a word for this is your reciprocity. For when another man treats your mother with no respect don't complain what else can you expect...It is the cycle of karma that we created within our generation why not lift up our woman like the men of the Zulu nation...

Next time you look into the eyes of a woman ....remember what you should see Jesus, Mahatma Ghandi, Malcolm X, name whatever great men you can conceive....Yes because they all come from a woman they all come from me...Yes I am the womb in which seeds are sown. I bear the pain of birth genetically to a man that will never be known...I am the mother of generations....the birth of nations....the scent of strength...the impossible inclination that in me you should see a reflection of yourself... Man I am your woman made on this earth for nothing else.

Kadesh Simms

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## BLACK ROSE I

Black Rose stand strong and tall for many of the forces will encourage you to fall.

Black Rose there is always a sun with a beam of light to guide you through your gloomy days and darkest nights.

Black Rose don't be fooled by the cunning smile of the small opportunities that exist for a short while.

Black Rose put your stake in life's ground and don't let your indecision be the conqueror of your true destiny.

Black Rose tomorrow waits for no one, Today is sure to pass and yesterday is a fading memory.

Black Rose use your petals as shields for life's abundance of dissappointments, let them protect you.

Black Rose for you are the seed of life that is feared by so many today.

## BLACK ROSE II

You're gifted and Black.

You always tried to uplift us even when they tried to hold us back.

Black Rose you offered hope and promise to every existing day.

Even when the obstacles were set in your path, you still found a way.

Black Rose your strength is stronger than the forty acres and a mule they supposedly would give you.

Black Rose you are rare and true.

There is no one on this planet who could replace you.

*Soror Nicole E. Smith, January 1991*

FACTS OF LIFE *by Nona Gale*

*I was afraid that he was going to be cranky by mid-walk or very irritable post-walk. The smallest things wore him out and set fire to the mood. Sometimes he needed to rest, other times were to breathe, but time was always to piece himself back together, constantly crumbling.*

*I wanted to protect him, always sensitive to his requirements. I embraced the erratic behavior. Laborious, but I wanted to. Like a rollercoaster—never steady, deep drops, sharp turns, unpredictably topsy-turvy—its path was clear, in front of my eyes. Suspenseful; I was always afraid.*

That day—thankfully!—went off without a hitch, worry-free. It was finally springtime.

The post-nap glow had come to a jolting halt when he awoke, aggravated and dripping with sweat. Almost automatically, we slipped into zones, ones where every discussion was about dying, pain, and regret, where each teardrop was acidic.

Whenever “something” happened, in the beginning, we would talk it out, go through the details of his anguish, analyze why he never felt happy. We'd live the milestones of his permanent hell, the virus that swam through his bloodstream, tainting him physically, emotionally, and mentally. HIV invaded every aspect and minute of his life—that afternoon, since the day I met him, for the two years prior, for the remains of his duration.

Before him, I had never met anyone HIV-positive. In my mind, the virus was more than a myth or a thing “that happens to other people,” but it had never settled in on my life, never personalized. My experience with it was limited to a repository of facts.

There is no preparation, no defense against the brutal reality of HIV. Textual and visual representation of the virus—textbooks, commercials, pamphlets, lectures, lessons, reports—only scratch the surface. Real-time HIV has the depth and gravity of a cold, vast body of water.

But I radiate enough warmth to help him shake off the chill of his sepulchral sea. That is how we ended our first day of spring.





HAILE SELASSIE (hī'lē slās'ē, —lā'sē), [Amharic,=power of the Trinity], 1892—1975, emperor of Ethiopia (1930—74)

He attempted internal reforms and took great pride in the suppression of slavery. In the 1960s and 70s he worked for pan-African aims, particularly through the Organization of African Unity. He was murdered in prison at the orders of the coup leaders in 1975.

Photo by LaDonna LaGuerre | Painting of Haile Selassie  
Bob Marley Museum  
KINGSTON, JAMAICA

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## *Thank You* by Amara Brown

Thanks to the ones who were workers  
in the fields,  
That worked under the hot sun  
Day in and day out, from dawn to dust  
Whipped and beaten  
They slaved for me.

Thanks to the ones who said "Yes ma'am"  
and "Yes, sir"  
Holding their tongues when the fire  
burns in their souls.  
Dealing with the racist slurs and lynching  
Frightened for their lives  
They were strong for me.

Thanks to the ones who fought for  
justice and equality  
That were beaten by racist police  
officers and attacked by police dogs.  
Walked miles to the capital to end  
the inequality  
Unable to have adequate public  
facilities.  
They fought for me.

Thanks to you  
My life is peaceful  
Because your's wasn't  
But you fought.  
I can have a good education  
Because you didn't  
But you fought.  
I will receive equal opportunities  
Because you couldn't  
But you fought.

You fought for me and others  
in my generation  
We don't think about how  
difficult your life was  
No words can repay the  
work and pain you experienced.

But thanks, thanks, thanks.



